

## My Family and Oskayapewis 2021-2022



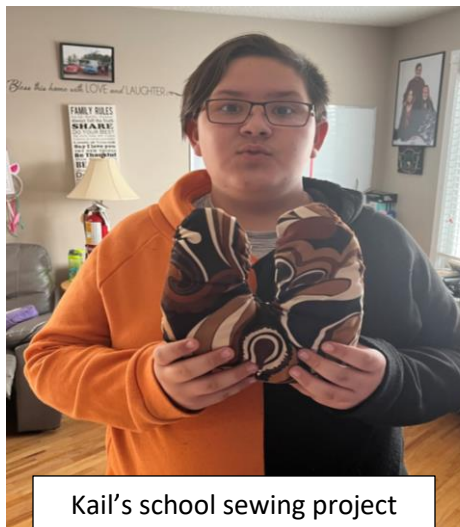
My family is Métis Cree from my mother's side and Irish/Newfie on my father's side. My mother's family was always raised as being "FRENCH". It wasn't until 2011 when Nevaeh was 5 and starting kindergarten that we discovered our truth (our ancestry). Over the past 11 years this journey has taken us in many different directions and places, but it seems we always end up exactly where we are supposed to be. My family (3 children) attended 'Culture Camp' last summer (2021) where they first met Tricia March and learned about Oskayapewis from a flyer left on a table. I feel like this was guidance from creator to be right where we needed to be. The flyer on a table at camp was one of these guidance's. My oldest (Nevaeh) dances 5 days a week but her younger brother and sister were looking for something to do to learn, challenge them and to give them purpose. I reached out to Tricia about Oskayapewis for both children but there were some hurdles to jump, some learning lessons, some understanding and teachings that all have brought us closer and stronger. Kail (age 13.7) and Anwen (age 11.9) routinely look forward to their Wednesday night meetings. They have made connections with friends, get to see family (Doodle) and create more family and new friendships, too. Over the past year I have had the opportunity as a mother to watch my children grow and flourish, to learn more about their culture and dig deeper into being ceremonial helpers. Some of their favourite activities have been scraping hide, making ribbon skirts, now making ribbon shirts, attending a movie, and trying many different foods along with hearing so many stories. Tricia has been so adaptable with covid, restrictions, roadblocks, and hurdles. She always has a cheerful voice, a listening ear and ability to create action and change. Recently, (outside of Oskayapewis) my family got to experience a sweat ceremony with our Midewiwin Family and Anwen and Kail got to watch and assist the Oskayape in ceremony and I truly felt like many of their teachings from the Oskayapewis program at Miskanaawah became clearer and tangible. The children continue to build their character with creators' guidance, the guidance of knowledge keepers, Elders, and others. Tessa Bailey is another special person to us at the Oskayapewis program. While she may not be there all the time Anwen and Kail have talked about her and look forward to seeing here.

Often, people do not realize the impact they have on others and Tricia, LaDelle and Tessa have left an impression on our hearts and minds.

I'd like to share with you a specific story from Oskayapewis relating to my family. Prior to Christmas in the height of yet another covid lock down Tricia and others were busy helping the youth plan, design, create and assemble ribbon skirts. There was always a chatter in the vehicle, in the house about these skirts but never much information given. Anwen came home one night with her beautiful skirt. She was so proud. It had a story, she sat and talked about her learning, design, skills and her sense of accomplishment and pride was beaming. However, Kail didn't come home with anything. He just said "oh, mines not done yet." Fast forward a month or two and I had forgotten about the ribbon skirts and Christmas morning had arrived. I was given a gift box from Kail, I opened the box and much to my surprise and excitement inside was a ribbon skirt for ME. He had been so kind, thoughtful, and generous to create his project for me and give it to Gramma to wrap so it was a surprise on Christmas Day. I treasure that skirt, wear it for ceremony and share my son's skills and kind heart with anyone that will listen. Anwen recently wore her skirt along with me in mine at a ceremony at St. Kateri Tekakwitha School with Elder Wanda Firstrider and we both stood proud with our skirts on. Kail started sewing at school and he was the first to complete their stitching project because he has knowledge and experience with the sewing machines, thread, needles, and the concept of what was being asked. This is impressive to the colonial world because "boys" aren't supposed to know how to do this. He continues to decolonize stereotypes and stay true to himself. Overall, we are able to share our stories, be proud of who we are, and inspire others.

I truly believe that Oskayapewis has given my children tools to add to their collection to continue their cultural journey. I believe this is simply the beginning of their learning to be ceremonial helpers but with the guidance and teachers they have I know that they will share their kind spirits, loving souls and make a difference in the lives of others. As you look back to the beginning you will find a word cloud that has been created by my family as we brainstormed what is important to us, what we've learnt, what Oskayapewis means to us and how it's impacted our families. The 7 sacred teachings have been an integral part of our teachings and learning as they define our spirits as we grow. The gift of ceremony, family and inclusivity helps us to be strong Indigenous role models. I take this opportunity to express from the bottom of my heart, thank you to everyone that has made this program possible. Thank you to everyone that has been supportive and encouraging. Thank you to everyone that behind the scenes is putting in countless hours, endless paperwork, and extensive planning. None of which goes unnoticed. We are proud to be part of Miskanawah's Oskayapewis family.

Hiy Hiy,  
Stacey Dyck  
403-809-6146  
Staceysd16@gmail.com



Kail's school sewing project



Ribbon skirt on left and right made at Oskayapewis